

**LIZ MCDERMOTT TESTIMONY on HB 7027 – Mental Health, Regional Mental Health Boards
February 23, 2017**

Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Liz McDermott and I am a registered voter in Norwalk. I am writing regarding HB 7027, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 2018. I am particularly concerned about cuts to mental health services and the Regional Mental Health Boards.

Will you and the Appropriations committee take careful consideration when you are deciding potential cuts to the Mental Health budget? We are already running on a shoestring and further cuts will put a lot of people at risk. I am a consumer of Mental Health services and I need to be able to get my medication and see my doctor's on a regular basis. If I were not able to get access to my support systems, I would not be able to function

It costs approximately \$1,000 a month to keep people stable and out of the hospital. As opposed to \$24,000 a month for a hospitalisation. If I were to get sick, I would have to go into the hospital for more than a month. I am stable because of the help I receive. I have not been in the hospital for over seven years and I only went in the last time for two days.

I am also worried about the proposed "consolidation" cut to the Regional Mental Health Boards. The amount to be cut from them would put them out of business, but they are the only organizations that brings consumers, providers, and town reps together to work on mental health initiatives and identify what's working and what's not. I have been involved with Catchment Area Council of Southwest Regional Mental Health Board for many years because it has given me a voice in raising awareness and fighting stigma. I am featured in a documentary made by SWRMHB as part of their Caring Network film series about living with mental illness, and right now I am chair of a committee to organize a county-wide mental health awareness walk coming up this May.

I will not be able to attend the hearing; however, I hope you will listen carefully to the testimonies and read the written ones as well. I am counting on your support on this issue.

Sincerely,
Liz McDermott